

## THE CARD TABLE.

From an esteemed reader we have this inquiry: "Does the Presbyterian Church allow or approve of card playing (for prizes generally) by its members, and has it become right (by custom or otherwise) for our elders and deacons to have such parties in their homes?"

Official deliverances on this subject have been made by several of our General Assemblies, and uniformly these have been in condemnation of the gambling vice. In 1890 the Assembly said: "Whereas, we recognize and deeply deplore the existence and blighting consequences of the sin of gambling, . . . therefore this Assembly renews the deliverances of former Assemblies against this evil, and exhorts and warns our people against the insidious and destructive influences of this sin."

There are those who contend that playing for prizes in fashionable games of cards, played in the social circle, does not partake of the nature of gambling. Let us read an answer to this claim in a letter written by a lady to the Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch: "The mother who accustoms her children to seeing whist parties, where there is as much eagerness and endeavor to win the prizes as there is to win the money at the gambler's table, need not be surprised if her sons find the attractions of that table more alluring than evenings spent in an honorable manner. Why should they see any harm in men doing what was done in their own home, and by their own mother? For what difference is there in reality between cash and that which cash has paid for?"

The claim is made that prizes are offered not to stimulate cupidity, but to infuse zest and intensity of interest into the game. But what is the secret of the zest and intensified interest but the allurements of capturing the coveted prize, not solely for its money value, but for its value as a trophy of success in a game of chance; its value as spoils in adventure in which others lost, and self won. Who will say that the spirit of covetousness and the trifling with justice is not as rank, as reckless and desperate in this case as when coin and banknotes are the stake? The professional gambler tells us that it is not greed for gain that lures him and impels him at the gaming table, but the strange, mighty spell of the gambling vice; the passion for winning, out of the uncertainties, the surprises, the arts, the manoeuvres and deceptions of the game. The uncertainty and suspense, when values are at stake, is an intoxicant to the mind, and the love of this abnormal condition becomes a base passion.

The London Tit-Bits says: "If the full story of the card table could be written it would surely be the most startling revelation of human cupidity ever published, and almost every page of it would be marked by some incident which would outstrip fiction." Some instances are then related which illustrate how this passion is the foe of every noble instinct and sentiment, and we are constrained to quote them to show the danger and degradation of this vice which modern society would fain, in some of its forms, regard as innocent:

"Mazarin's passion for gambling was so strong even in death that he played cards to the very end, when he was so weak that they had to be held for him, and the

'merry monarch' spent his last Sunday on earth playing at basset round a large table with his great courtiers and other dissolute persons and with a bank of at least 2,000 pounds before him."

"An equally remarkable story is told of George Payne, the great turf plunger of seventy years ago. On one occasion he sat down at Limmer's hotel to play cards with Lord Albert Denison, later the first Lord Londesborough. Hour after hour passed. The game proceeded all through the night and long after day dawned, and it was not until an urgent message came to tell Lord Albert that his bride was waiting for him at the altar of St. George's, Hanover square, that the cards were at last flung down. It was Lord Albert's wedding day, and he met his bride 30,000 pounds poorer than when he left her on the previous day."

"When Louis XV. was at the card table the fascination of the game made him absolutely dead to all externals and even to decency and humanity. On one occasion when he was playing for heavy stakes one of his opponents, overcome by excitement, collapsed in his chair in a fit of apoplexy. His majesty affected to ignore the incident until some one exclaimed, 'M. de Chauvelin is ill!' 'Ill?' retorted the king, casting a careless glance at the stricken man: 'he is dead. Take him away.'"

"Equally weird is a story Goldsmith tells. When the clergyman arrived to prepare a lady parishioner who had a passion for gambling for her approaching death the lady after listening for a short time to his exhortation exclaimed: 'That's enough! Now let us have a game of cards.' To humor her the parson consented to play. The dying woman won all his money and had just suggested playing for her funeral fee when she fell back and expired."

"When Lord Granville was ambassador to France, one afternoon when he was about to return to Paris he repaired to Graham's to have a farewell game of whist, ordering his carriage to be at the door at 4. When it arrived he was much too deep in the game to be disturbed. At 10 o'clock he sent out to say that he was not ready and that the horses had better be changed. Six hours later the same message was sent out, and twice more the waiting horses were changed before he consented to leave the table after losing 10,000 pounds."

The appeal of the liquor interests that they be allowed to continue in business because their business brings a revenue to the community or state is absurd. The total revenue, federal, state, and local or municipal, from the liquor trade last year was two hundred and sixty-seven million dollars. The cash paid into the till of the liquor dealers by the people was nearly two and a quarter billion dollars. And this last figure does not include at all the cost which the tax-payers took to themselves in supplying police, courts, prisons, and penitentiaries, made necessary by the traffic. If one year's drink bill and crime-produced bill could be saved, it would pay the national debt twice over!

If my Heavenly Father knows, my ignorance is not such a serious matter.